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ABSTRACT

The human relation model discussed in this booklet serves the dual purpose of facilitating the development of equal human relations and the myriad aspects associated with desegregation. This is not considered a scientific report, but a guide to group discussion. Although the model presented is based on the most advanced findings from interaction in teaching and the systems approach in communication, there is not an attempt here to declare it as the final answer to problems in this area. The human relations model is presented as a flow-chart which indicates the phases through which a bi-racial group passes to reach a tensionless condition conducive to a consideration of delicate race problems. A face-to-face commitment of a few people to work together is a first essential. The acknowledgement of equal human status and a concession by each component that it is unaware of concepts held by the other are the next two stages. Then, a consideration of displeasing words, an exposure of some beliefs, and a recognition that reception and direction must cross racial lines will complete the approach to a condition of psychological neutrality in which there would be little potential difference between ethnic components of the group. The atmosphere thus generated will permit in-depth consideration of all desegregation problems. (Author/JW)

FOREWORD

The members of the faculty of the Curry Memorial School of Education recognize the need for new ideas in education, research and information of wide professional concern to ease our troubles. Increasingly, as educators and as members of the world community, we wish to interact in *our* time and with our fellows, to be gadflies and to engage other gadflies.

We encourage the use of specialized tools to dig out tentative responses, suggestions of means, parts of answers. As gadflying specialists, we know that problems must be attacked from many directions. We recognize the interdependence of the various scholarly pursuits and we also recognize that fresh insights and experimentation will be sparked by multi-disciplinary approaches. The interdependent nature of our studies demands effective communication, the need to avoid unintelligible technical prose, as well as "the false clarity of over-simplification."

Mindful of these things, we publish from time to time "occasional papers" on a variety of educational topics designed to raise new questions, stimulate the creation of new ideas, and foster research aimed at discovering "why." These papers suggest rather than conclude. Our hope is that we may interact with the times, to do our part to solve the problems, to out gadfly our gadflying children.

James H. Bash
Professor of Education
Director of Field Services

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Occasional Paper 4

A HUMAN RELATIONS MODEL FOR A DESEGREGATED GROUP

by

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Introduction

Initiating dialogues between blacks and whites *immediately* to consider desegregation problems--such as academic differentials or poor reading performance of the so-called disadvantaged--may prove to be a waste of human and technological resources. These are elaborate and complicated considerations and there is usually a need to establish, first, a basis for "threat-free" discussion of such problems. The establishment of a climate for free and unemotional consideration of desegregation problems is essential to the development of equal human relations between the black and white components of a desegregated group. It would appear to be the "greater part of wisdom" to avoid "blocking" this important initial stage of the development of friendship and mutual trust.

The human relation model proffered and discussed herein serves the dual purpose of facilitating the development of equal human relations and the myriad aspects associated with desegregation. The model, when followed carefully and conscientiously, will tend to separate the black component's concern for equal human status from its concern for recognized and accepted educational problems. Moreover, it provides the educational leader with a technique for assigning priorities in resolving desegregation difficulties in his school units.

This is not a scientific report, but a guide to group discussion. Although the model presented is based on the most advanced findings from interaction in teaching and the systems approach in communication, there is no attempt here to declare it the final answer to problems in this area. The use of the model for the stimulation of group discussion and interaction prior to a more intensive consideration of specific desegregation problems would constitute ample realization of its purpose.

The following human relations model is presented as a flow-chart which indicates the phases through which a bi-racial group passes to reach a tensionless condition conducive to a consideration of delicate race problems. A face-to-face commitment of a few people to work together is a first essential. The acknowledgment of equal human status and a concession by each component that it is unaware of concepts held by the other are the next two stages. Then, a consideration of displeasing words, an exposure of some beliefs, and a recognition that reception and direction must cross racial lines in equal amounts, discussed in any order, will complete the approach to a condition of psychological neutrality in which there would be little potential difference between ethnic components of the group. The atmosphere, thus generated, will permit in-depth consideration of all desegregation problems.

Face-to-Face Commitment

"Most of the communication among earth's people is on the person-to-person level, and this is the most effective."[1] This belief is the justification for the face-to-face commitment of a desegregated group. In order to reach the meanings of past bi-racial experiences, new and somewhat structured experiences are required, particularly if behavioral modification is expected. The face-to-face arrangement is similar to the setting of direct experience which provides the most effective learning process.

The size and the ethnic composition of the group deserves special consideration. Ideally, the number of members varies from three to twenty-one, black members constituting about one-third of the total. A larger group than this tends to diminish the possibility of direct personal experiences or at least lessen the chances of individual participation. Larger percentages of blacks sometimes restrain the participation of the white component. If the small group selected is representative of one much larger, considerable behavioral modification may occur when group participants share their group's experience with friends and relatives with whom they share mutual

[1]Gordon McCloskey, *Education and Public Understanding,* New York: Harper Row, Publishers, 1967, p. 78.

trust.

Within a school, the administration should provide and support a series of semi-organized meetings. These establish the bases for human relations growth. Not all sessions should be devoted to human relations. Once the model has been covered successfully by the group, the usual desegregation problems will emerge for discussion in almost natural order. The group should be legitimitized by a strong supportive statement from the division superintendent and by his continued presence during the early meetings of the series.

Equal Human Status Accordance

Once a group is authorized and its members are committed to meet, every effort should be made to effect the accordance of equal human status to all. This often is a most difficult procedure because of the abstract and pervasive nature of the notion that we indeed are all equal even when social practice denies it. One method of achieving successful "equal" human relations is expressed as follows:

> This is the key essential in human relations--show others that you are interested in them . . . study them so you can learn to sense their needs and their reactions. . . communicate with them in terms of their own interests, and in every way you can, show your interest in them . . . when you use this ABC technique, your communications will be successful.[2]

The accordance of equal human status may be reduced to the same essentials:

1. Showing interest in others.
2. Studying the needs and reactions of others.
3. Communicating in terms of others' interests.

A hand shake, a use of a title, an invitation for coke or coffee, or an invitation to be addressed by first-name, or other common and sometimes overlooked graces, are acts of accordance of equal

[2]Robert E. Moore, *The Human Side of Successful Communication* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961), p. 187.

human status. These acts are simple and very well may go unnoticed or be dismissed as unessential. But without these acts that achieve this important step in human relations, every other possible success is lessened, if not thwarted. For the most part such efforts will have to come first from the white members of a group since they are accustomed to playing the superordinate role in previous relationships involving black persons. Great innovative instructional plans costing large sums of money may be stymied or lost completely by shunning these acts of personal respect, even where they are implicit in the program. The end result of these acts will be a level of equal responsibility in making the human relations experience work.

In the case of black people, their strong need, or perhaps demand, for equal human status is related to many of their educational deficiencies. Black people must be sure that they are respected as equal human beings and that academic deficiencies are not a basis for withholding respect. It is only futile for whites to discuss the tests, poor reading performance, or other academic deficiencies of black students with fellow black professionals without first according equal human status. A sense of self-respect based on the notion of equal human status, must be experienced by all in a working group to the extent that participation in discussion is both free and relaxed. Once this level of relationship has been reached and has become well established, the disassociation of concern for equal human status from that of concern for educational deficiencies is easily and readily sensed by all members of the involved group.

Unawareness Concession

It is being stated in popular literature that "white unawareness is the most serious barrier to easing the racial crisis."[3] It would seem closer to the truth in the area of school desegregation that both black and white

[3]Patricia Coffin, "Black-White: Can We Bridge the Gap?" *Look*, January 7, 1969, 16-17.

are unaware of a host of items, including offensive verbal expressions, questionable self-concepts, and the factor of mutualism which exists in most relationships. The general cover of unawareness is sealed, first, by perception and then, by information verbally given without obtaining feedback. The lifting of this canopy of unmindfulness may be achieved by profferring some information, plus much interaction in a legitimatized small group.

To be awakened to the existence of unknowing in an area of great significance, human relations, in school desegregation must be followed by frank and open acknowledgment of this to other members of the group. Admission of new perceptions and of the acceptance of new information contributes to the emerging of a condition of friendship and mutual trust. The heeding and yielding implicit in the notions of the unawareness concession, when made manifest in group discussion, prevent the dangerous feeling of certainty, a certainty of misperceptions held, generated by the desire for security but which is based on lack of knowledge. Acknowledgment of the unconsciousness of certain interethnic facts and generalities leads to a willingness to examine evidence emerging from within the group.

Under the figurative umbrella of unawareness lie three areas of immediate significance to any plan of attack on the critical problems triggered by school desegregation. First, there is a small number of displeasing communication cues which are among the most frequently used words in school work. Second, certain self-concepts, which are mental formulations of one's own self based on a broad spectrum of selected information, have not been examined by persons across race lines. Third, there is the "two-way-street" mutualism which has unique application to many of the problems of human relations.

Displeasing Cues

In the so-called "language of prejudice" one may find displeasing words which interfere with the effort to discuss race problems. These words are also attitudinal arousal cues which carry unintentional insults

across racial lines. Most important of these are nigger, Nigra for Negro, boy, Tom, Joe, Sam, aunt, and uncle. There are some other expressions, such as "your people," "them," "they," which also cause black people to block out any subsequent meanings intended by whites no matter how long the conversation, and lead often to a categorization of whites as prejudiced. Although these cues vary in meaning from locality to locality, they deserve serious consideration in well-intended group discussion of desegregation problems.

The mitigation of displeasing communication cues should occupy the members of a discussion group. The lessening of the severity of these words may be achieved by open discussion. The slips which come later may even seem facetious, except in the case of "nigger" or "nigra." These two terms should be avoided. It is astonishing to see how effective a desegregated group discussion becomes once the sting is removed from averse cue words. Very often the unawareness concession will begin with a discussion of the cue words and leads to some rather surprising results.

Self-Concept Exposure

A life of experience--interaction with people and things--has generated for most individuals mental formulations which for them are valid generalizations. Much of this "knowledge" resulted from vicarious cultural transmission and did not include realistic interracial experiences. This is one reason for the need of self-concept exposure during a discussion of the human relation aspects of school desegregation.

These concepts (generalizations and/or "knowledge"), held by professional educators and related to the process of school desegregation, are frequently sealed off and granted certainty with authority. A skillful group leader may be needed to break them loose from the tight individual network of ideas and to get them adequately examined through discussion.

Several questions may suggest some of these generalizations which need inter-racial exploration: How do you feel about the use of titles such as Mr., Mrs., and Miss? Do you know Negroes whom you address as uncle or aunt? Are standardized tests adequate for the classification of black and white pupils? Which is the proper word, "black," "Negro," "colored," or "Afro-American"? Have black public schools been academic or were they just training institutions?

The skillful placement of these and other such questions in an atmosphere that's growing in a sense of friendship and mutual trust may stimulate the general exposure of self-concepts related to race.

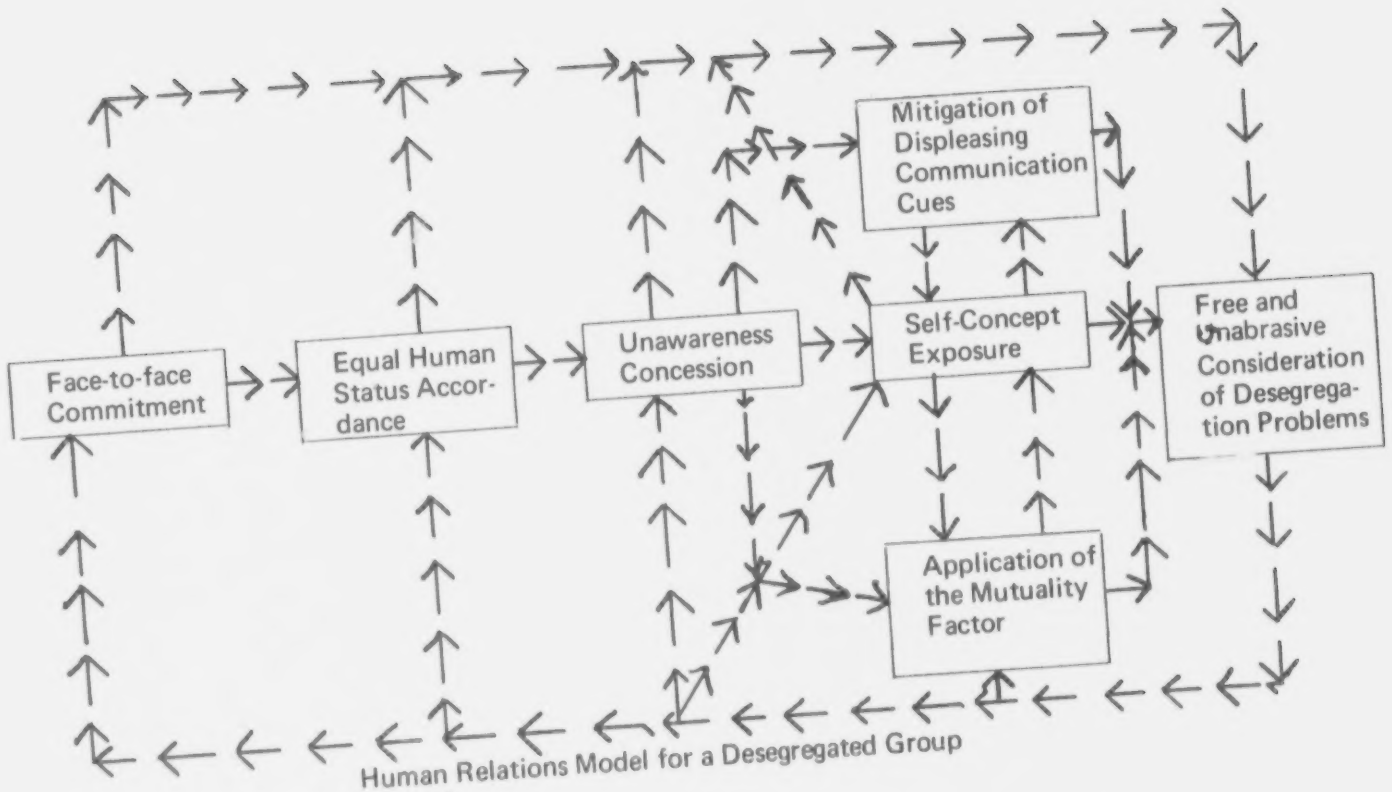
Application of the Mutuality Factor

The mutuality factor provides for the "two-way street." It denotes what two people do, feel, or represent to one another. In an intergroup discussion of problems of desegregation it suggest direction and reception in equal amounts across racial lines. The application of this give-and-take--exchange on even and equal terms--in the discussion of desegregation problems provides the continuity of discussion in depth and contributes much to the community of the group.

Summary

Figure 1 shows the human relations model for a desegregated group. It is a systems approach to the development of friendship and mutual trust in a desegregated group. As the arrows indicate, it is not only a movement through a designated period of time, but a transaction which continues, when racial problems are attacked, beyond the immediate discussion group.

The strong nouns of action--commitment, accordance, concessions, mitigation, exposure, and application--used in labelling each construct, suggest personal and active participation of members of the desegregated group. Their realization provides the possibility of a direct personal experience with people of another race. The process-product of the application of this human relations model to a desegregated group, in all probability, will be a free and unabrasive consideration of desegregation problems.



Human Relations Model for a Desegregated Group
Figure I

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2 *In-Service Training for Two-Year College Faculty and Staff: The Role of the Graduate Institution* by Jay L. Chronister

3 *On Expanding Access to Education for Financially Disadvantaged Students* by M. Howard Bryant (available April 1, 1971)

4 *A Human Relations Model for a Desegregated Group* by Nathan E. Johnson and James H. Bash (available April 1, 1971)

5 *Grading Changes: Why and How* by Robert H. Pate, Jr. and Pamela C. Kloeppel (available May 1, 1971)

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7 *Graduate Education: A 1975 Progress Report* by Jerry G. Short (available August 1, 1971)